



Pigs and Planes:
Uncollected Poems
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Pigs and Planes

I don't believe in poetry.
It's a slant that wavers
around different patches
of sky, or mud chucked
on slats of a sty. Or it
could be the pig, or the
plane, farmer or pilot,
pork-chop industrialist, air-
traffic controller. The one
thing it isn't is itself.
To say poetry is poetry
is a rank offence, post-
misdemeanor, sub-felony,
the sort of sin credulous
people pray against. Pigs
you can believe in, & sties.
Planes you can believe in, & skies.
I don't believe in poetry.

The Ballad of Robert Johnson

Mojo unhinged, he tumbles in black—
voice on a skewer, blood-flow gone slack.
He slept w/ a girl behind somebody's back.

Her body a car, she drove through the door—
bed like a highway, sheets on the floor.
He came into something he never went for.

The man on the porch was blacker than jet—
mottled in whiskey, bitter and wet.
He offered the flask with a little regret.

Chills in Rob's chest knew something was wrong—
juice was too sharp, its' tang was too strong—
mud in his guts like an unfinished song.

Collapsed on the road, hellhounds close in—
nothing but maggots crawl under his skin.
All for a lover he never could win.

Legends arose when he lay in the ground—
at midnight, the crossroads, shadows abound,
he waits with the Devil but can't make a sound.

Yet Robert's still singing, and never can go—
he's hotter than asphalt, colder than snow.
His knowledge of evil bewitches and glows.

The crossroads are here, the Devil is rife—
w/ each one we love, we give up our life.
Remember poor Robert when you take a wife.

To Gil Ott

What
naturally
becomes
a soul's
ascension?

Children's
gestures
transmuted
willfully
into

armor
against
waves
pushing
downwards?

Excavation
of roots
doesn't equal
destruction
of such—

death,
a going
deeper,
higher,
paradox.

To John Tranter, after reading *Late Night Radio*

Why write, embittered by
black days? You could scout the
sun rise, sip coffee. No one's picking
at your liver, no heroic feats need
doing. Noon could be pure gravy;
nothing need not be filled w/ more
nothing. All that's in the files
stays in the files, all that's gone
brackish is in the ocean now.
What's not cream isn't vinegar.
It could be iced coffee, not Starbucks.

On Jazz

Physical beauty, Formal Rigor of God—
spiritual beauty, Economy of God—
Natural Will, Transcendent Will,
Facile Will in all its' dismal "there-ness"—

Piano broken chords breaking down space
like watching bits of paper collect,
contained in a 12-bar blues; root
notes you tend to lean on,
or maybe a honking minor third,
a harmonic multi-colored sharp...

Follow your compulsion into flurries,
clusters of connecting phrases,
then a pause to sanctify as the progression
resolves after lingering on the fifth
for the appointed time—
pentatonics mainly w/ some suspensions,
sheets of sound, trademark leaps,
like watching a rainbow erupt
out of the placid bowels of street-lakes,
sparrows in the gutters,
Eliot-esque alienation syncopated
impossibly high & mighty...

Repeat the repetition now into major scale—
Ionian gold, major-third suspensions again,
almost midnight for tremulous trees,
also hipsters, flights of birds, rabbis
in the wilderness as blues ends; here's a quicker
quirkier jarring bit to cut
your teeth on...

Base bottom notes natural like ferns,
ride the ride cymbal like musical fellatio,
roll w/ rolls & kick-drum ejaculations,
what Hart Crane heard in bridges,
only blues (so bridge seldom comes),
stasis achieved nicely replicates movements,
bowel, kidney, heart-beat, daring snare of lip-ness,
thickness, quickness,
get it all out for all of us into the brick-laden city,

mutter of exhausted midnight buses

as vibrato notes shiver, miniature
solos on the toms creates energy
of emptiness among the weird abundance,
concluding w/ roll on the snare, now bass
also investigates metaphysical space,
not so much implacable as inexhaustible
eruptions; spring of autumn,
autumn of spring...

Seasons of balance, compromise,
away from extremes; Middle Path exteriorized,
oh piano on a minor seventh which bespeaks
longing for a more ethereal world,
elegiac as the last apple of October, eaten
by a Halloween camp-fire, beyond blues
of Earth into cadence, dying fall of pure moon,
ravaged, torn from the throat of persistence,
mute existence destroyed completely
and on fire, a universe of fingers & mouths,
looking down the tide of Death into eternity,
square-shouldered & erect,
freezing into whims of Ultimate "there-ness",
beyond ordinary notions of quotidian abyss
in one long sitting pow-wow peace-pipe corn-cob
wholesome dinner of Voidness,
but insinuated only to drive away singularity....

Jazz is plural,
they give you a space, show you its' contours,
allow you to move around & drown
if you want over hilltops of remorse, created
by Love or dolorous longing & especially
Central Parks of the soul & intellectual Bordello
life cut & pasting its' bleak outline over rooftops
& bluebirds—

Run Away with Me

I was thinking as I listened to her
about Byron's relentless nihilism,
that only found out in intoxication
any kind of remedy for the things
she was telling me about abortions,
forced entries, deaths, and how *no I won't go*
home with you, and how Byron
alone among the Romantics dealt
overtly with sex, not just love like
Shelley or fantasy like Keats or Nature

like Wordsworth the dull sheep,
and all the blokes in the bar were
staring at her— green eyes, red hair,
bust, you know the kind that blokes
will stare at, and I thought Byron
really caught something a seed,
a kernel of what Nietzsche ran away
with (*recurrence!*), so I said *please run*
away with me and she laughed, looked down
into her beer and was finished—

To Jenny

Shuffled into an order, shut down, shuttled
into rooms, tiny or cavernous, left befuddled
at how random the show is (as you know, it is
a show, nothing behind it), but still your wits
may get you through it, the deals, bargains, work
pushing pieces around, under two feet of murk—

now all this, world you see before you, of a city
beleaguered in uncertain years— physically flinty,
empty streets, bars, parks, stores, arrays displayed,
wares no longer needed, blouses, dresses, weighed
against investments more to the point: food, paint,
& City Hall never changes: both sublime & quaint.

You want it to be a stage: fit for a Mummer's Parade.
You place the tiara on your head. Your eyes give shade.
They are good, your eyes, you picked them up somewhere.
The shock of Rittenhouse Square: people know you there.
What's in your mind is that you are waiting: where's the cue?
The footlights make a haze. You're clear, sharp, see through.

The irresolute point of this is: I know not where it's going,
either. Phoenix bird from ashes, Gabriel's horn blowing,
I can't see the *telos*, how you can own the stage rightly.
I only see the tension build, build, bleeding you nightly.
I learned how to stage manage a long time ago, learned
how to set stages generally. I'll wait to see what part you've earned.

Derrida's "Dead"

So I

spy Abby
come in
dressed for

sex hair
bleached bra
non-strapped
if she strips

for me I'll
be happy
to be
"around" her

but she has
no ideas but
in things,
hard to be

hard, hard
to be
hard

Credits

fieralingue— “Pigs and Planes”

Great Works— “To Gil Ott”

Nth Position— “To John Tranter...”

Otoliths— “Run Away with Me (draft)”

Seven Corners— “On Jazz”

The Seattle Star— “The Ballad of Robert Johnson”